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*The Death of Ministers Considered,  
and Improved.*

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A  
S E R M O N

PREACHED

At *Carter-Lane*, April 20. 1746.

Being the Second LORD'S DAY after the  
Interment of that

*Eminent, Faithful, and Useful Minister*  
of JESUS CHRIST

*Dr. Samuel Wright.*

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By *JOHN MILNER*, D. D.

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Published on Occasion of the Death of some  
*worthy Ministers*, within the compass of a  
few Weeks past.

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L O N D O N.

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W. Musgrave.



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THE  
PREFACE.

*U*Nderstanding that the publication of the following Sermon would be agreeable to some Friends, I transcribed it soon after it was preached; but was not determined then to let it come abroad.

*The Death of so many valuable Ministers together, within little more than the compass of a month, and with whom I had a personal friendship, viz. Dr. Wright, Mr. Bayes, and Mr. George Smyth of Hackney, affected me in a particular manner;*



*ner ; and I could not but think such a Providence should be considered, and improved by our Churches. This incident, certainly, should teach us to look beyond this Life, and excite both Ministers and People to make the most of their remaining advantages and opportunities.*

*In such circumstances it was apprehended by those, to whose judgment I submitted, that the ensuing Discourse would be seasonable and of general benefit. I consented therefore to its Publication ; and hope, by the Blessing of God, it may be useful to awaken in us proper reflections on such events, and serve the interest of practical and real Religion.*

May 26,  
1746.



J. M.



## ACTS XX. 25.

*And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.*

**G**OD has been speaking to us of late in very moving language. When the common methods of instruction fail, and the world is running apace into greater security and corruption, He is pleased sometimes to step out of the ordinary course of things, to awaken mens attention by their fears, and teach them the *value* of their privileges and mercies by the *want* of them. *It is time for thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void thy law*<sup>a</sup>.

I need not observe to you that Providence has lately brought a *cloud* upon *You*. This House in mourning testifies as well your *loss* as *respect*. There is another Lamp of the  
A                      Sanctuary

<sup>a</sup> Psal. cxix. 129.

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Sanctuary extinguished; another Star of the Redeemer's right hand which disappears; another Ambassador of Peace recalled. Could our Prayers have prevailed, *He would have still flourished in the courts of our God, and brought forth fruit in old age*<sup>b</sup>. The Will of God is always *right*, and therefore not to be disputed; but then it is always *instructive*, and therefore not to be disregarded by us.

As I am, *I hope*, providentially brought here, whilst your loss is yet recent and fresh in your minds, I owe so much to *Religion* and *Friendship* as to take a particular notice of it. And though I might be inclined to speak of your *Worthy Pastor* and *my Friend* in terms of the greatest respect, I chuse rather to improve the occasion to the advantage of *Practical Religion*, and offer such reflections as might render the close of that Life useful, which was so long, and so entirely devoted to your Service.

*Imagine your late Pastor* here in his usual Station, taking his solemn farewell of you; *suppose* him declaring the manner of his Conversation — the conduct of his Ministry — his dangers and temptations — so *St. Paul did at parting with his Friends*. *Suppose*

<sup>b</sup> Psal. xcii. 13.

*Considered, and Improved.* 3

pose him earnestly exhorting you to watchfulness and perseverance — affectionately commending you to the Grace and Blessing of God; and then closing his Discourse in this manner, *Now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.* How warm, how impressive must such a parting be! When the *One* preached the Kingdom of God, and knew he was doing his *last office* of kindness to those dear immortal Souls. When the *other* heard them plainly and affectionately recommended; but then it would be the *last time* by this endeared Friend. How pathetically would the *one* preach! How sensibly would the *other* feel, and the saving power of truth spread from Soul to Soul!

This was the very case of *St. Paul* at parting with his *Ephesian Friends*; they were *to see his face no more*; and it was a mournful farewell; tears on both sides, *and they all wept sore.* v. 37.

The Death of your *Pastor*, who hath fed the Church of God in this place, I make no doubt is resented by you in a very tender manner; especially for this reason, that you will *see his face no more*: a reflection that



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opened all the Springs of grief in *St. Paul's* friends, *sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more*; and it comes home to you.

“ No more shall he preach the Kingdom of  
“ God among you. No more expound the  
“ holy Scriptures — assist your covenant  
“ transactions — encourage your Faith — di-  
“ rect your duty — warn, counsel or comfort  
“ you — no more labour for your conviction  
“ or establishment.” Death hath put an  
end to all this useful Service. — From the  
Word and Providence of God learn these  
things.

1. . . . *That Ministers must remove and die,  
how useful soever they have been in their  
Station.*

2. . . . *That the loss of such is matter of just  
concern and Sorrow.*

3. . . . *How to improve such sad Provi-  
dences, when they come to affect us.*

I. . . . *Ministers must remove and die how  
useful soever they have been in their Sta-  
tion* — They are subject to like passions  
with other men; and to like miseries,  
of which the greatest and last is Death.  
Sin

*Considered, and Improved.* 5

Sin has imposed this sad necessity upon us, and extended it to all the human race. *By one Man Sin entered into the world and Death by Sin, and so Death passed upon all Men<sup>c</sup>.*

Their work is divine, their message the Everlasting Gospel, but their Persons are mortal. *We have this Treasure, says the Apostle, in earthen vessels, liable to be broken, that the Excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of us<sup>d</sup>.* That God might be more eyed, and glorified, and we find this comfort rise out of such weakness; though the vessels may be dashed in pieces, the Treasure cannot be lost. The Experience of all times confirms this, that Ministers must die, as well as other men. *Our Fathers where are they? And the Prophets do they live for ever<sup>e</sup>?* There is good reason why it should be so;

1. *To preserve a due distinction between Christ and his Ministers.* He is the only Mediator of the New Covenant, the alone appointed Dispenser of Divine Blessings. Should Ministers, who are but his Agents, be perpetually in office, it might weaken  
our

<sup>c</sup> Rom. v. 12. <sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 7. <sup>e</sup> Zech. i. 5.

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our dependence on Christ, and derogate from the honour of his Priesthood; it might lead us to have mens persons in admiration, and to ascribe too much to their abilities and usefulness. Ministers therefore die, and resign their Trust into other hands, that our principal regard may be to him, who hath an *unchangeable Priesthood*, and a *perpetual Consecration*<sup>f</sup>.

2. *Ministers die that the Church may enjoy a variety of Gifts.* The duty which God requires of Man is so plainly revealed, that Persons of the meanest capacity may understand it, and consequently there can be no room for invention or discovery in Religion. Yet there is a difference in the administration of things. One Manner may be more agreeable; another more useful. One Minister may think it his duty to remove the hay and stubble, which have been laid on the foundation of Christianity, that when the rubbish is taken away the building might appear in its beauty and excellency. Another would establish Religion on the solid and immoveable basis of Divine Perfections and right Reason. One lays himself out in affecting

<sup>f</sup> Heb. vii. 23, 24, 28.



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ing representations of the Grace and Mercy of the Gospel : *Another* is more earnest and persuaſive in the Application, to preſs matters home to the Conſcience and Life.

Though thoſe talents are various, yet they are all uſeful, as aiming at the ſame end, the glory of God, and the good of immortal Souls. All may be exerciſed without in- conſiſtency ; all approved without partiality. So it was as to more Extraordinary gifts ; *there are diverſities of gifts, but the ſame Spirit ; and diverſities of adminiſtration, but the ſame Lord*<sup>s</sup>. A ſucceſſion of different talents is ſometimes uſeful ; and Chriſt, who knows the wants and neceſſities of his Church, is pleaſed by ſuch removals to provide for it.

3. *Minifters ſometimes are removed to prove the Churches they belonged to, both the Secure and Sincere in them.* God would prove the *Secure*, what their thoughts, reflections and reſolutions will be on this occaſion. They have ſate long under a warm Miniſtry, but the *ice* is not yet thawed about their Hearts. They have heard often the ſound of the Goſ- pel from this Voice, and were not to be awakened. This *paufe and interruption* makes them

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them look about. They find their Guide, their faithful Friend is taken from them, and possibly now they may enter into serious Reflections upon their present State. *But whether they will bear, or whether they will forbear, they shall know that a Prophet has been amongst them*<sup>h</sup>.

God would prove the *Sincere*, whether they have leaned upon Instruments too much or not; whether they can trust God's Promise and Provision without *Curiosity*; and are willing to support his worship without *indifference*. Now is the time of trial what Christians prevailing relishes and designs are. What they can do with God by their Prayers, and what they will do for God by their Interest. But

4. And lastly — *Ministers die, that they may go and receive their Reward*. Our Province is difficult, our own and others infirmities make it so. Considering the unpleasing messages we bring, persuading men to give up their beloved lusts, and fall out as it were with themselves; reproaching those freedoms, which neither interest or discretion can justify; subverting those false grounds of  
Hope

<sup>h</sup> Ezek. ii. 5.

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Hope, which they seem to lean upon too much; considering these things, it is a wonder that we are not the most hated of all men. But this is our Comfort, that God and mens Consciences are on our Side, and justify a fair and honest representation of the Gospel, though for the present men may be displeased with us. Considering the different Tempers we have to do with; and the care and exactness we must take to form our own, to be Examples to Believers *in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*<sup>i</sup>; considering we have the human passions, capable of being moved by the occasions of Joy and Sorrow, as well as others; and are perhaps more exposed to the attacks of envy and ill-will; considering such like difficulties and discouragements, I have been ready with *Solomon, to praise the dead, who are already dead*<sup>k</sup>. “Happy you, who have  
“ acquitted yourselves with honour and fidelity in your Stations; who have accomplished your warfare, and finished your  
“ course. Happy you, who have left our  
“ stormy Regions, and will now for ever  
“ be insensible to our *fears, ruffles, and dangers.*”

B

But

<sup>i</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 12.

<sup>k</sup> Eccles. iv. 2.



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But is there not a fitness and propriety between labour and rest ; between the character of those *who have turned many to Righteousness*, and the promised *Crown of Righteousness*? Hard, indeed, would be their lot, who have borne the *heat and burthen of the day*, should they not have an *evening* to refresh them. Discouraging their work to prepare others for Heaven, and be kept out of it themselves—But this is their consolation, the *times of refreshing* will come for them as well as others ; the *important day* will appear, when their Faithfulness will be owned and rewarded, *though Israel be not gathered*.  
— I proceed

II. . . . *To shew that the loss of useful and faithful Ministers cannot but be a matter of just concern and sorrow ; especially, when according to the course of things, we might have hoped for their longer usefulness ; when the circumstances of the Church and the World made their continuance very desirable. St. Paul had a desire to depart and to be with Christ ; longed to be where he had laboured and encouraged others to aspire. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you*<sup>1</sup>. Will  
not

<sup>1</sup> Philip. i. 24.

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not *Humanity* teach us some resentment at the Death of a neighbour or a friend? Is it not agreeable to the tenderness of an human heart to drop a *sigh* or a *tear* into an open grave? Certainly then we cannot be unmoved when a Character of usefulness fails. *Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of Men*<sup>m</sup>. — But let us consider what just reason there may be for this Sorrow; as

1. *The importance of their Message in general, will render the death of useful Ministers grievous.* The nature of their work is of so diffusive a benefit, and attended with such great consequences, that the failure of any assistance in it must give us some concern.

The duty of Ministers is to raise the Souls of men above sensible and earthly things to the great Author of Being and Happiness; to affect them with a near and interesting view of the everlasting world. — 'Tis to exalt Christ, and represent him in his excellencies and glories; as the Author of our Peace, and the foundation of our acceptance and hopes — 'Tis to call men to Repentance; explain the virtues of a good Life,

B 2

shew

<sup>m</sup> Psal. xii. 1.

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shew their obligation and necessity in order to Salvation ; and persuade men to the practice of them by every engaging motive, and with great earnestness of address.

This is the view of the christian Ministry ; this forms a Character of Beneficence and Charity, such as will always have the Countenance and Approbation of wise and good men. When death removes one acting according to this view with Zeal and Sincerity, it is a weakening to the interest of Religion, and cannot but be esteemed a *publick loss*.

2. *The engaging address of some will particularly endear them to us, and give us real pain at parting with them.* St. Paul so conducted himself in his labours, as to win the Hearts of his Friends ; and then no wonder they wept at his leaving them. We need no other proof of it than from this very Chapter. *For instance ;*

The Apostle discovered *a serious turn of Piety*, an awful Sense of God. It was not reputation, interest, or party, but God's glory which principally impressed his Heart. *Serving the Lord with all Humility of Mind, with many tears and temptations*<sup>n</sup>. It was a  
willing

<sup>n</sup> Ver. 19.



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willing chosen Service though an hazardous one.

He was *Faithful* in making known the Divine will; *concealed* nothing from them, which he thought necessary for them to know; *intermingled* nothing with it, which he thought dangerous for them to receive. He did not study their humour, but profit; did not preach what might please them to hear, but what they ought. *I kept back nothing that was profitable for you — I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. I have taught you publickly, and from house to house*°.

In his Discourses he insisted on the *great points of Religion*; did not amuse his hearers with trifling or uncertain opinions; nor court applause by curiosities of Explication, but honestly and fairly told them what God required of them, their Duty as well as Privilege. *Faith* and *Holiness* in conjunction were the topicks he recommended. *Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ* — urging them to love and good works from an excellent Saying of our Saviour's,

° Ver. 20, 27.

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viour's, *that it was more blessed to give than to receive*<sup>p</sup>.

He shewed a generous concern for Souls; was sensibly moved with an apprehension of their Ruin, and thought no pains too much to prevent it. *Compassion* affected his Heart, and when inclination led the way, *labor ipse voluptas*, his duty was his pleasure. He would not excuse himself if he might be useful; nor fear bonds and imprisonments, if he might spread the Knowledge of Salvation. He was glad to *spend* and be *spent* in this Service, and *fulfil the Ministry* he had received. *By the Space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears — I coveted no man's silver or gold*<sup>q</sup>.

He *Prayed* earnestly for his Friends, and bore them on his heart to the *throne of Grace*. He desired for them the best of blessings, and from the best of Friends, even God himself. *And now, Brethren, I commend you to God, and the word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified*<sup>q</sup> 'Twas Heaven, and a personal meetness for it; 'twas Grace, and a thankful dependance upon God for it, that he asked for them.

This

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This was *St. Paul's* engaging manner, worthy the imitation of all *Christian Ministers*; and, without pretending to an *Equality*, I may venture to say, you have lost *One like minded*. Such a manner must insinuate itself into the affections, strengthen the mutual bands of Love and Esteem, and render *a parting* still more afflicting.

3. And lastly — *The circumstances of the Church and World may be such, that we could ill spare those, who are eminent friends and supporters to Religion*. We are ready to think, the Principles of Religion so plain and reasonable; the Excellency of Christ, and the beauties of holiness so engaging, that a naked proposal of them would make its own way, and captivate the soul — but experience convinces us of our mistake in thinking so.

When *Mens Tempers* are various, and their *Prejudices* strongly inlaid, there will be then need of a SKILFUL MINISTER; one well furnished, and able to *divide rightly the word of Truth*; to give to every one his portion; one that has wisdom to discern the Seasons of Counsel; to chuse acceptable words, and prudently apply them to particular Cases and Occasions;

When



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When a *dividing spirit* prevails, and the glory of a *Party* shall be more considered than that of *Piety*; when men shall narrow the foundations of Christianity, and confine the favour of God to themselves; in such Circumstances a HEALING MINISTER could badly be spared — a Man of temper and moderation, that would avoid Extremes, and bring Christians closer together upon the most Catholick Principles; who can leave matters of doubtful disputation to every man's judgment and integrity; will honour the image of God wherever he sees it, and breathe out his Charity in the language and spirit of the Apostle, *Grace be with all them, that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*<sup>r</sup>,

When there is too general a *corruption of Principles and Manners*; when Enthusiasm and Infidelity prevail beyond the example of former Times, and exert themselves without decency or discretion; when the work of Reformation is remiss, and those few endeavours that are used fruitless; when there is little of the power of Godliness among those who keep up the Form; when, finally, there is a disregard to the house of God in some, a great indifference in the house

<sup>r</sup> Eph. vi. 24.

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house of God in others, and *the things that remain are ready to die*, a ZEALOUS MINISTER could hardly be spared; one that would warmly espouse the cause of truth, without infringing the Rights of *Liberty and Conscience*; one that would press forward Practical Religion, *the great end of Truth and the Gospel*, with a divine fervency.

When *Sin is growing into Credit and Power*, and countenanced more than ever by popular customs and examples; when *Integrity* lies open to many dangerous Snares, and the force of wrong Motives; in such a Situation we could not well part with an HONEST and FAITHFUL MINISTER, whose *Integrity* would be uncorrupt, whose Testimony to Religion would be firm and unshaken; one who would testify against all Vice, every appearance of it, and approach towards it; one that would *scorn* to sacrifice his Conscience to *interest* or *popularity*; would be neither partial to friendship, nor afraid of frowns; that would not fear the face of any man in point of duty, *but cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and the house of Judah their Sin*<sup>f</sup>.

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When

<sup>f</sup> Ezek. xvi. 2.

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When God is contending with a Nation for their Sins, shakes his rod over it, and fills it with fear and terrour; when he threatens to make his Sanctuary a desolation in the midst of it; it would be grievous then to lose a PRAYING MINISTER, one that would have *stood in the gap*, and been a constant Intercessor with God, saying, *Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach*<sup>t</sup>.

So that matters in the Church, and the World may be so circumstanced, as to make the death of *an Eminent, Faithful, and Useful Minister* a PUBLICK LOSS; a sad and mournful Event. I am confident it will be thought so by all, who have any Concern for the welfare of their Country, and the prosperity of true Religion. — I come now to the

III. . . . And last head I proposed, namely, *To shew how we ought to improve such sad Providences, when they come to affect us.* Such a Providence now affects you, by the Death of your late worthy Pastor Dr. *Wright*.

I pretend not to say, that He reached the heights of an Apostle's Zeal and Fervour;  
or

<sup>t</sup> Joel ii. 17.



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or equaled *Paul's* Love to Christ and Souls; or, indeed, was without Infirmary; yet this I will say, and all that knew him, know this Testimony to be true, that He was an able Minister of the New Testament; was heartily concerned for the good of Souls, and the Success of Religion; was a firm friend to Liberty of every kind, and the Protestant interest; was of a publick Spirit, and ready to devise and encourage liberal things.

He was much endeared to you by many years Service and Usefulness. You will be witnesses that in preaching the Gospel, *He renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the Truth commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God*<sup>u</sup>. The flourishing state of your Church in these declining times; the Honour and Esteem in which he maintained divine Ordinances; the regards he procured to the Spiritual and Divine Life by his labours and works are incontestable proofs of his Worth — but it is not my design to give you his *Character*, I chuse rather to assist you in improving this Providence.

C 2

His

<sup>u</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 2.

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His worth you knew, his loss you sensibly feel; and I would hope, this is now a season of serious reflection. — Consider then

1. The most immediate use of this Providence is *to consider your latter End*. You see none are exempted from the Stroke of Death. The *Learned*, the *Wise*, the *Useful* must resign, must lay their heads level with the dust. And when ever that time comes *all their purposes will be broken off, even the thoughts of their heart<sup>w</sup>*; their projecting, their aspiring, all their kind beneficent thoughts.

If we would *anticipate* this Event in our Thoughts, it would very much abate our *natural fears* of it, and bring us to the important hour with less surprize. We cannot, certainly, throw off life with as much indifferency as our cloths. No, it will require some consideration and courage to pass through the last extremity of Nature; and Religion would furnish us with proper motives to Both.

I see that here I have *no continuing city*. I have only a short passage through this world, and should I be fond of it? Should I build  
my

<sup>w</sup> Job. xviii. 11. Psal. cxlvi. 4.

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my happiness upon such slender foundations; or take too fast hold of that I must part with so soon? What is this but to lay in provision for my own disappointment and anxiety? No — *let me enjoy as if I possessed not, and use the World, as not abusing it, for its fashion, its glory is passing away\**. Let the certainty and greatness of everlasting objects come into nearer view, that I may taste my enjoyments, as the Jews did their Passover, *with their loins girt, and shoes on their feet, and a staff in their hand<sup>y</sup>*, as persons in haste, and ready to be gone.

The season of Grace is valuable; God's forbearance and entreaty of sinful man wonderful. What a glorious Privilege do I enjoy, in having the Gospel so freely tendered to me; in having Ambassadors of Peace sent to treat with me about my Soul's happiness, and *beseek me in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God!* Should I neglect this opportunity, when all my helps and advantages are passing away? There is another Friend and Guide gone, and have I got nothing by such an advantage?

I have reason to excite myself to my duty, and *whatever my hand findeth to do, to do it*

\* 1 Cor. vii. 30, 31.    <sup>y</sup> Exod. xii. 11.



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*it with all my might, for I see the season of doing good, as well as getting it must end. And what have I done to answer the purposes of my Being? How employed my talents, and filled up the relations in which I stand to my fellow-creatures? I have before me a Pattern not only of the weakness of human life, but of the great Purposes to which it may be applied; and should I not be excited by it to a diligent improvement of my talents? Your deceased Pastor has often taught you in his Sermons how to live; He now teaches you once by his Example how to die. His face you will see no more; very soon yours will be hid in the same manner. Methinks it should affect you to consider that, perhaps, within the compass of fifty years, new faces may appear in those Seats, and the greater part of this present Assembly be number'd among the Dead.*

2. *When Ministers die the Gospel lives, 'Tis an Everlasting Gospel that we preach unto you<sup>2</sup>. All flesh withers as the Grass, and all the glory of Man fades as the flower, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever: And this is the word, that by the Gospel is preached*

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xiv. 6.

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*preached unto you*<sup>a</sup>. Though Ministers may be silent, the Gospel will still *call, invite and comfort*. 'Tis a fountain ever open and flowing, *the Streams whereof make glad the City*, the Church of God. Amidst all our losses and distresses this is our encouragement.

'Tis a pleasure to think that we have here an *Everlasting Covenant* to rely upon, an *invariable Rule* to walk by, and the Promise of an *Eternal Rest* to receive us. You may have another Minister, but not another Gospel. No — though an *Angel should pretend to bring it from Heaven*<sup>b</sup>. We have reason then to prize this Treasure above all Things. So *Job* did, *I have esteemed the words of his Mouth more than my necessary food*<sup>c</sup>. This Word of God is the *joy* of Believers in all Ages, their *Treasure* in all conditions. *Oh my Friends*, let us make this *joy*, this *treasure* our own; and the way to do that is to imprint its *Truths* on our Hearts, and shew its *power* in our Lives.

You will now have another opportunity of discovering your Regards to it. You will not forget, that 'tis a Gospel of *Peace*, and a Gospel of *Purity*; the *one* will serve to regulate your END, the *other* your TEMPER  
in

<sup>a</sup> 1 Pet. i. 24, 25.    <sup>b</sup> Gal. i. 8.    <sup>c</sup> Job. xxiii. 12.

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in pursuing it. Let me *beseech* you to remember that all your regards will fall short of its excellent design, 'till you come under its *sanctifying* and *practical* Influence.

3. *When Ministers die we have a sensible conviction, what little dependance there is upon Man; upon good Men, upon useful Men: Their hearts desire and prayer to God is, no doubt, that you might be saved. The Benefit you have received from their Ministry may very justly excite in you a grateful Esteem and Affection of them. But, perhaps, you depended upon them more than you ought; leaned on those feeble props more than you should. God is now proving you how you stand affected on their removal. Now it will be seen whether your Religion is rightly founded or not. Whether it results from a lively abiding Sense of its Excellency, Reasonableness, and Authority; or whether it will turn to lukewarmness and indifferency: 'Tis a sad thing to bury our Religion in the same graves with our Ministers; and very partial reasoning to think, that none can instruct us in the way to Christ and Heaven besides those we have lost.*

By



*Considered, and Improved.* 25

By *such Providences* God would take us off from instruments, and bring us to a closer dependance on himself. He would convince us that *that wisdom, power and holiness*, which contributed so much to our good, were originally derived from Himself; that Ministers were only instruments for conveying his Blessing of *Light, Life, and Love*. Those *earthen Vessels* therefore must be broken, that the *Excellency of the power* might appear to be of God, and not of them.

4. *Your Sorrow for your Minister now dead, is heightened, I doubt not, by this consideration, that you received great benefit from him whilst he lived.* Love is usually the Strength and Measure of all our other passions. You loved him because his Services were useful to you, because he was a friend to your Souls, and assisted you to think and judge right of your *supreme Happiness*.

Some of you, *perhaps*, were awakened by him out of your Security and Carnality, and reclaimed from a vain conversation to the *wisdom of the Just*. This, *perhaps*, was the *instrument* by which God was pleased to convince you of your *undone State*; the *Guide* by which he led you to Christ for *peace and safety*. From him you learnt the *deceitful-*  
D ness

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*ness of Sin*, the necessity of *being born again*, the pleasures of Religion, the greatness and glories of the world to come. Many of you, who are now grown up to full Life, may, *possibly*, remember how you were affected in the early part of your days by his seasonable councils; then, when you were surrounded with flattering temptations, and had less *Experience* and *Caution* to guard against them.

He had a serious concern for the *rising generation*, that good principles might take the first possession of them; He was solicitous, that they might *forsake the way of the foolish and live*<sup>d</sup>. Many, I hope, can bless God for your Establishment in the practice of Piety, for your comfortable Sabbaths, for your religious friendship, that you *took sweet council together, and walked to the house of God in company*<sup>e</sup>.

A Ministry that has been thus useful, may well be supposed to end with the *grief* of those who have received advantage by it; and when *grief* results from such a sense of things, 'tis a generous and noble passion. 'Tis no other than a tribute of *Gratitude* both to God and Man. When we exalt the *Grace* of God, there is a piece of respect  
due

<sup>d</sup> Prov. ix. 6.    <sup>e</sup> Psal. lv. 14.

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due to the instrument; esteem and love for the work sake<sup>f</sup>. The Apostle would claim some interest in the *Corinthians* affections on this account, *Though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many Fathers, for in Christ I have begotten you through the Gospel*<sup>g</sup>. You will see his face no more; but, I trust, you can add to this sad reflection, *we bless God that we ever saw it.*

5. And lastly — Let us grow wiser by all God's dealings with us, and press home such mournful events upon our Consciences; I mean all of us, both those who have been careless under their advantages, and those who have been improving them.

FIRST. *You will see his face no more* in this world. Methinks you should hear this with some regret, whom he has left behind him in an unregenerate State. A kind friend to your Souls is now gone out of your reach; his days are numbered, his Account closed, and you stand debtors there until your names are cancelled by a speedy and sincere Repentance. Ah — how could you remain in darkness, whilst *a burning and shining*

D 2

Light

<sup>f</sup> 1 Thess. v. 13.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 15.



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*Light* was so near you? How could you defeat the reasonings, or resist the persuasions of *such a Master in Israel?*

Reflections on lost Advantages and Seasons are a considerable part of future misery, but without the least mixture of *Light* or *Hope*. Your reflections of this nature may now be improved to valuable purposes, to work in you a Shame and Sorrow that would lead you to God. If still you go on in the same temper, the time is coming when it will be equally without excuse, or remedy.

Certainly you cannot say, that the *Principles of Religion* were not duly inculcated upon you, nor the *Deceitfulness of Sin* exposed, nor the *Importance of the New Birth* discovered; both the *Riches of Mercy*, and the *Terrours of wrath* were offered to you; *the great concern of human life* was explained in its several branches, and every consideration offered to engage your attention. Is it not grievous to lose those advantages; dreadful to fall from those heights? Oh, that what his life and labours could not effect, his death might accomplish, lead you to a closer examination of your hearts, and to make a solemn dedication of yourselves to God in Christ! Consider, *I beseech you*, tho' you will  
*see*

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*see his Face no more* in this world, yet you must expect to meet him in the other: But with what shame, with what confusion, with what trembling, if he must then appear a witness against you! Think of this in time, and may the seeds of virtue which he has sown, and which have been long buried under the clods, rise up into a fruitful harvest.

SECONDLY; *You will see his face no more* in this world, to whom he has so often communicated the light and comfort of the Gospel. There is a voice in this Providence to you, and it is this — *Remember how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast*<sup>h</sup>.

Under your advantages think what the world will expect from you. How should your Example lead; your Light shine; your Knowledge, Experience, and Affections in Religion influence your whole temper and conduct. The *christian and divine Life* is something more than form and profession; what insinuates itself into the very frame and constitution of the Soul. There ever accompanies it a favour and relish of Divine things, which nothing *forced* or *artificial* can reach. As your helps have been great, it is but reasonable to hope that you *stand more*  
*complete*

<sup>h</sup> Rev. iii. 3.

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*complete in the will of God. Go on, my Friends, to a more perfect Establishment in Religion. The pleasure will increase with the Service, and the Reward be in proportion to your integrity and constancy.*

Cherish all those good impressions which have been made upon you, and suffer not your Esteem of *Practical Religion*, in its utmost latitude, to wear away to indifferency. In this consists the *image* of God, the *power* of Religion, and the *evidence* of Eternal Life. If we decline here, or substitute any thing in the room of it, we shall cross all the kind purposes of our Saviour, and miserably deceive ourselves. For the plain Gospel is this, *that without HOLINESS no man shall see the Lord*<sup>i</sup>.

Take heed of *Backsliding*, and *Declensions* in your Souls. *As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord you must walk in him.* I think in this all Christians are agreed, or ought to be, that *Practice* makes the *Christian*, and finishes the Character of a *Believer*.

God is pleased to give you some occasion for Sorrow, but then your loss is not total. Though this *Pulpit* is in mourning, yet it is not *desitute* and *empty*; tho' one is taken,  
*another*

<sup>i</sup> Heb. xii. 14.



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*another* is left, I mean that *Worthy Person*<sup>k</sup>, who has long assisted you in your Spiritual Affairs, and who is *like minded, and careth for you*. Bless God for every remaining Mercy and Advantage.

Think of the *approaching time* when you shall see that face again, which is now hid from you. Yes, you shall see it, and know it, for you are to be *his joy, his glory, and his crown of rejoicing at the coming of Christ*. I have nothing more to add, but to commend you to God, and the word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified — which God of his infinite Mercy grant through Jesus Christ our Lord.

<sup>k</sup> The Reverend Mr. *Thomas Newman*, who is since chosen Pastor of that Church.

THE END.

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